



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 21, 2011

Mr. Warren M. S. Ernst
Chief of General Counsel Division
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street, Room 7BN
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2011-03854

Dear Mr. Ernst:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 411736.

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for certain information pertaining to the McCommas Landfill from August 27, 2010 to the date of the request. You state some of the requested information will be released to the requestor upon payment. You claim the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.107 and 552.111 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information that comes within the attorney-client privilege. When asserting the attorney-client privilege, a governmental body has the burden of providing the necessary facts to demonstrate the elements of the privilege in order to withhold the information at issue. *See* ORD 676 at 6-7. First, a governmental

¹Although you also raise Rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence, section 552.107 is the appropriate exception to raise for the information you have submitted, which is not subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 676 (2002).

²We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

body must demonstrate that the information constitutes or documents a communication. *Id.* at 7. Second, the communication must have been made “for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services” to the client governmental body. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). The privilege does not apply when an attorney or representative is involved in some capacity other than that of providing or facilitating professional legal services to the client governmental body. *See In re Tex. Farmers Ins. Exch.*, 990 S.W.2d 337, 340 (Tex. App.—Texarkana 1999, orig. proceeding) (attorney-client privilege does not apply if attorney acting in capacity other than that of attorney). Governmental attorneys often act in capacities other than that of professional legal counsel, such as administrators, investigators, or managers. Thus, the mere fact that a communication involves an attorney for the government does not demonstrate this element. Third, the privilege applies only to communications between or among clients, client representatives, lawyers, and lawyer representatives. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). Thus, a governmental body must inform this office of the identities and capacities of the individuals to whom each communication at issue has been made. Lastly, the attorney-client privilege applies only to a confidential communication, *id.*, meaning it was “not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client or those reasonably necessary for the transmission of the communication.” *Id.* 503(a)(5). Whether a communication meets this definition depends on the intent of the parties involved at the time the information was communicated. *See Osborne v. Johnson*, 954 S.W.2d 180, 184 (Tex. App.—Waco 1997, no pet.). Moreover, because the client may elect to waive the privilege at any time, a governmental body must explain that the confidentiality of a communication has been maintained. Section 552.107(1) generally excepts an entire communication that is demonstrated to be protected by the attorney-client privilege unless otherwise waived by the governmental body. *See Huie v. DeShazo*, 922 S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein).

You state the submitted information consists of confidential communications between attorneys for the city and employees and officials of the city. You state the communications were for the purpose of rendering professional legal services to the city. You have identified the parties to the communications. We understand the communications at issue were intended to be and have remained confidential. Based on your representations and our review, we find the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.107 of the Government Code.³

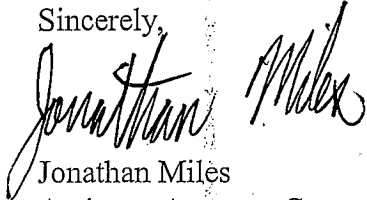
This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and

³As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jonathan Miles".

Jonathan Miles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JM/em

Ref: ID# 411736

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)